

## **Florida Promotes “Nature-Based” Coastal Infrastructure for Flood Protection**

**SB 302 – Sen. Ileana Garcia (HB 1035 – Rep. James Mooney Jr.)**

### **General Bill Summary**

SB 302 establishes a statewide framework to encourage the use of nature-based solutions to improve coastal resilience. The bill creates s. 380.0938, F.S., directing the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop rules, guidance, and a regulatory framework for projects that use natural systems to reduce coastal flooding, erosion, and storm impacts.

The legislation defines key concepts such as nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, gray infrastructure, and hybrid infrastructure. These approaches include projects like living shorelines, mangrove restoration, dune systems, oyster reefs, and other natural or hybrid coastal protection features designed to mitigate flooding and storm surge while also supporting ecosystem health.

The bill also authorizes certain resilience-related restoration activities within aquatic preserves, including dredging or shoreline restoration when conducted for coastal resiliency purposes.

Additionally, DEP must conduct a statewide feasibility study evaluating how nature-based coastal infrastructure could reduce flood risk and potentially improve local governments’ ratings under the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System (CRS) or lower flood insurance costs. DEP must submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1, 2027.

To support the study, the bill appropriates \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds from the Resilient Florida Trust Fund.

### **Potential County Impact**

The bill may affect counties primarily through coastal resilience planning, project implementation, and coordination with DEP.

By directing DEP to establish statewide guidance and permitting frameworks for nature-based coastal infrastructure, the bill may provide greater regulatory clarity for counties implementing shoreline protection or flood mitigation projects. Counties may benefit from standardized state guidance when designing projects such as living shorelines, wetland restoration, or hybrid natural-engineered coastal defenses.

Counties with coastal areas may also incorporate nature-based infrastructure strategies into local resilience plans, hazard mitigation planning, and shoreline management programs. These approaches could help counties reduce erosion, flooding, and storm surge impacts while supporting habitat restoration and water quality improvements.

The DEP feasibility study examining potential improvements to Community Rating System (CRS) scores may be particularly relevant to counties that participate in the National Flood

Insurance Program. If nature-based projects are shown to improve CRS ratings, counties may be able to pursue these strategies as a tool to lower flood insurance premiums for residents.

The bill does not impose a direct mandate on counties; however, counties may participate in project planning, outreach, and coordination with DEP as the state develops guidance and evaluates the effectiveness of nature-based resilience strategies.

### **Effective Date**

July 1, 2026.

### **Primary Statutory References**

- **Creates: s. 380.0938, F.S.**
- **Amends: s. 258.397, F.S.; s. 258.42, F.S.**